

BLOG

The Power of Gut Feelings

We have found that tapping into our own team members' gut feelings gives us a competitive edge and plays an important role in the success of both our teams and our business.

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There's a lot to be said about trusting your instincts. Not just in our personal lives — but at work, too. At Sensei Labs, we have found that tapping into our own team members' gut feelings gives us a competitive edge and plays an important role in the success of both our teams and our business.

One main application is the Project Reviews feature in our platform that asks our team members for their gut feelings on all of their projects. We take the reviews seriously around here, because they allow our entire team to better understand and drive the success of every project.

Project Reviews 101:

Project Reviews are easy to complete but they're by no means basic. They involve three key areas that provide us with the qualitative data we need to confirm whether projects are on course or at risk of running off the rails.

- **Step 1:** Share your gut feeling on each project, by selecting a color-coded status button. As you might expect, green means everything's on track; yellow means you have concerns, and red means there are major problems. There's a bonus blue status button to call out when the project is exceeding expectations!
- **Step 2:** Select a category or several categories to classify your concern — we use categories like financial concern, timeline concern, communication fail, etc.
- **Step 3:** Back up your gut feeling with a short summary of why you have concerns or why the project is moving along so well.

This information not only helps us to uncover potential issues, but it calls attention to the team's successes too — reminding us to also celebrate our victories.

1. How do you feel about this project? What is your "gut feel"?

GREEN
Everything is going as planned. Nothing to be concerned about

YELLOW
I have growing concerns that problems are developing on this project

RED
There are major problems on this project and action is needed to correct it

AWESOME!
This project is exceptional and the team should take notice!

2. Add in your comments or concerns



On my call with our client and she raised some concerns about possible delays in the next two weeks. Let's regroup and work out a plan to address her concerns.

Select at least one category

- ☐ financial concern ⓘ
- ☒ timeline concern
- ☐ resourcing concern
- ☐ quality of deliverables concern
- ☐ effectiveness of work
- ☐ team burnout concern ⓘ
- ☒ communication fail
- ☐ other

SAVE AND GO TO NEXT STEP

We have found that collecting this often-overlooked qualitative information provides a window into the minds and feelings of our team members — an advantage most companies don't have. Without regular check-ins, their red flags go undetected and there's no way for them to address issues until it's too late.

We know. Because years ago, we went down that road. In fact, we specifically created Conductor because we knew there had to be a better, smarter, more intuitive way to work.

We know we're not alone. We've spoken with lots of teams who have experienced the same concern about their progress at some point during a project. In most cases however, they tend to keep their concerns to themselves. There are all kinds of reasons for this, including power dynamics, the fear of not looking like a team player, or just not wanting to be the one to rock the boat.

That's why it's been critical for us make Project Reviews a weekly occurrence — one that is highly valued within our culture. When everyone is encouraged to share their gut feelings, it becomes normalized and even expected. Problems are more easily avoided, project outcomes are improved, and the team is more productive, successful, and ultimately happier. Similarly, we make a point of

recognizing the importance of our people's honest feedback and encouraging others to follow their lead.

Gut feelings alone aren't enough.

Cultural fit is a common example where relying on “gut feel” alone can be problematic. The decision to hire one of several qualified candidates often comes down to “fit.” Fit, however, often comes down to an indescribable ‘gut feeling’ that informs your perceptions of who may or may not mesh well with the team.

Often, the people we perceive as being a great fit are simply *just like us*, and that can be dangerous. Consciously and unconsciously — *relying solely on “gut feel” opens up the hiring process to all kinds of biases*. In this case, that bias can lead to a homogenized team. Without a variety of personalities and backgrounds, we would lose out on the benefits of a diverse team.

So how do we combat this bias? We've carefully defined a set of ‘cultural fit’ criteria that we think are important to the team and record how the candidates rate across those criteria. This way, we have measurable data to back up the interviewers' gut feeling on fit.

Try it for yourself!

Add gut feel reviews to your next initiative, back them up with data, and see what new insights you uncover!

READ ONLINE

Read this article on our website

getconductor.com/resources/the-power-of-gut-feelings



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